

CATHERINE'S LITERARY WORK

Therself for a while in habitual virtue, and dwells in the cell of knowledge of self, in order better to know the goodness of God ; and love follows knowledge, and, when she loves, she seeks to know and to clothe herself with the truth. But in no way does she mature taste and become illumined by this truth as much as by means of humble and continuous prayer, based on knowledge of

• If and of God; for prayer, exercising the soul in this way, unites her to God, as she follows the steps of Christ crucified ; and thus, by desire and affection and union of love, she is transformed into him. This it seems that Christ meant when He said : *If a man love Me, he will keep My words;* and again : *He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him, and he will be one with Me and I with him.* And in many places we find similar words, by which we can see that it is

• due that, by affection of love, the soul becomes another He." x

The rest of the book is practically an expansion of the revelation that Catherine had in a vision, after receiving Holy communion on a feast of the Blessed Virgin, in the autumn of the previous year ; a revelation which, in a more partial form, she had already set forth in a letter to Fra Raimondo.² It is, as it were, a gathering together of the spiritual teachings scattered through her letters. On the whole, it reads somewhat less statically, as though written with more deliberation than the letters, and is in parts drawn out to considerable length, and sometimes moves slowly. The effect is that of a mysterious voice from the cloud, talking on in a great silence ; and the result is monotonous, because the listener's attention becomes overstrained. Here and there, it is almost a relief when the Divine Voice ceases, and Catherine herself takes up the word. At other times, however, we feel that we have almost passed behind the veil that shields the Holy of Holies, and that we are, in very truth, hearing Catherine's rendering into finite words of the ineffable things which she has learned by intuition in that half hour during which there is silence in Heaven. The importance of

¹ Cap. i.

² Letter 272 (90).